

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, ranking members Miner and France and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Dr. Immacula Cann and I am from Stratford. I am with CT Against Gun Violence. My doctorate is in nursing and my specialty is psychiatric-mental health.

I am testifying in support of the \$3.6 million included in the Governor's budget adjustment bill for the Department of Public Health (DPH) to fund gun violence prevention programs.

I lost my sister-in-law to gun violence and that has led me to work to improve our laws. However, solutions need to go beyond strong gun laws. Gun violence is an epidemic and the spread of guns has made our streets more dangerous. Last year gun homicides were the highest in 25 years, nearly double the level in 2018. The need to take action is very urgent to help save lives because on average, someone in CT is murdered with a gun once every three days. While law enforcement is necessary, it is not sufficient to de-escalate conflict and break cycles of violence that too often involve guns. Gun violence is an urgent public health crisis that demands the state to invest more to save lives.

Beyond the loss of life and profound impact on communities that experience high levels of gun violence, it has a tremendous economic cost. According to Everytown and Giffords Law Center, it's estimated that gun violence (of all kinds) costs Connecticut taxpayers between \$60 and \$90 million annually, and carries a yearly societal cost of up to \$1.2 billion. It's estimated that the law enforcement and healthcare costs of a single gun homicide are \$488,000, and each non-fatal shooting costs \$71,000.

Legislation should be guided by a sense of duty and responsibility and invest more in community-based prevention and intervention solutions; it has ample resources to do so. According to the CT Mirror, Connecticut has a projected budget surplus of more than \$2 billion. In total, the state received \$6.3 billion from the American Rescue Plan Act.

While I commend the Governor for proposing \$3.6 million to fund community gun violence prevention programs, I urge the legislature to do more. It should create an Office of Gun Violence Prevention in the Department of Public Health (DPH), and commit to more substantial levels of funding.

I ask that you favorably support of DPH funding for gun violence prevention. Like most of you living here, we should be vested in our community and the future of Connecticut. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Dr. Immacula Cann*

Stratford, CT